Percy Bysshe Shelley

Percy Bysshe Shelley (/bɪʃ/ (listen) *BISH*;[1][2] 4 August 1792 – 8 July 1822) was one of the major English Romantic poets, widely regarded as one of the greatest lyric and philosophical poets in the English language.[3] A radical in his poetry as well as in his political and social views, Shelley did not see fame during his lifetime, but recognition of his achievements in poetry grew steadily following his death. Shelley became a key member of a close circle of visionary poets and writers that included Lord Byron, John Keats, Leigh Hunt, Thomas Love Peacock and his own second wife, Mary Shelley (the author of *Frankenstein*).

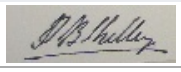
Shelley is best known for classic poems such as "Ozymandias", "Ode to the West Wind", "To a Skylark", "Music, When Soft Voices Die", "The Cloud" and *The Masque of Anarchy*. His other major works include a groundbreaking verse drama, *The Cenci* (1819), and long, visionary, philosophical poems such as *Queen Mab* (later reworked as *The Daemon of the World*), *Alastor*, *The Revolt of Islam*, *Adonais*, *Prometheus Unbound* (1820)—widely considered his masterpiece—*Hellas: A Lyrical Drama* (1821) and his final, unfinished work, *The Triumph of Life* (1822).

Shelley's close circle of friends included some of the most important progressive/radical thinkers of his day, including his father-in-law, the philosopher William Godwin (1756–1836), and Leigh Hunt (1784–1859). Though Shelley's poetry and prose output remained steady throughout his life, most publishers and journals declined to publish his work for fear of being arrested for either blasphemy or sedition. Shelley's poetry sometimes had only an underground readership during his day, but his poetic achievements have become widely recognized today, and his political and social thought had an impact on the Chartist and other movements in England, and reach down to the present day. Shelley's theories of economics and morality, for example, had a profound influence on Karl Marx (1818–1883); his early—perhaps first—writings on nonviolent resistance influenced Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), whose writings on the subject in turn influenced Mahatma Gandhi, and through him Martin Luther King Jr. and others practicing nonviolence during the American civil rights movement.

Shelley became a lodestar to the subsequent three or four generations of poets, including important Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite poets such as Robert Browning (1812–1889) and Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882). Admirers have included Oscar Wilde, Thomas Hardy, George Bernard Shaw, Leo Tolstoy, Bertrand Russell, W. B. Yeats, Upton Sinclair and Isadora Duncan.[4] Henry David Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* (1849) apparently shows the influence of Shelley's writings and theories on nonviolence in protest and political action. Shelley's popularity and influence has continued to grow in contemporary poetry circles.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Portrait of Shelley, by Alfred Clint (1829)

Born	4 August 1792 Horsham, Sussex, England
Died	8 July 1822 (aged 29) Gulf of La Spezia, Kingdom of Sardinia (now Italy)
Occupation	Poet · dramatist · essayist · novelist
Nationality	English
Education	University of Oxford
Literary movement	Romanticism
Spouse	Harriet Westbrook (m. 1811; died 1816) Mary Shelley (m. 1816)
Signature	

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Life

Early life and education

Shelley was born on 4 August 1792 at Field Place, Broadbridge Heath, near Horsham, West Sussex, England.[5][6] He was the eldest son of Sir Timothy Shelley (1753–1844), a Whig Member of Parliament for Horsham from 1790 to 1792 and for Shoreham between 1806 and 1812, and his wife, Elizabeth Pilfold (1763–1846), a Sussex landowner.[7][8] He had four younger sisters and one much younger brother. He received his early education at home, tutored by the cleric Evan Edwards of nearby Warnham. His cousin and lifelong friend Thomas Medwin, who lived nearby, recounted his early childhood in his *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. It was a happy and contented childhood spent largely in country pursuits such as fishing and hunting.[9]

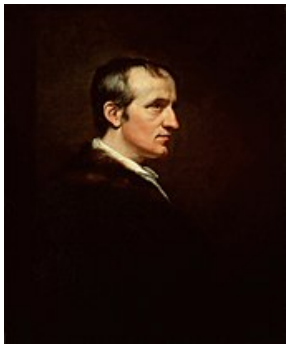
In 1802 he entered the Syon House Academy of Brentford, Middlesex. In 1804, Shelley entered Eton College, where he fared poorly and was subjected to an almost daily mob torment at around noon by older boys, who aptly called these incidents "Shelley-baits". Surrounded, the young Shelley would have his books torn from his hands and his clothes pulled at and torn until he cried out madly in his high-pitched "cracked soprano" of a voice.[10] This daily misery could be attributed to Shelley's refusal to take part in fagging and his indifference towards games and other youthful activities. Because of these peculiarities, he acquired the nickname "Mad Shelley".[11] Shelley possessed a keen interest in science at Eton, which he would often apply to cause a surprising amount of mischief for a boy considered to be so sensible. Shelley would often use a frictional electric machine to charge the door handle of his room, much to the amusement of his friends. His friends were particularly amused when his gentlemanly tutor, Mr Bethell, in attempting to enter his room, was alarmed at the noise of the electric shocks, despite Shelley's dutiful protestations.[12] His mischievous side was again demonstrated by "his last bit of naughtiness at school",[11] which was to blow up a tree on Eton's South Meadow with gunpowder. Despite these jocular incidents, a contemporary of Shelley, W. H. Marie, recalled that Shelley made no friends at Eton, although he did seek a kindred spirit without success.

On 10 April 1810 he matriculated at University College, Oxford where he frequently read for sixteen hours a day.[13] His first publication was a Gothic novel, *Zastrozzi* (1810), in which he vented his early atheistic worldview through the villain Zastrozzi; this was followed at the end of the year by *St. Irvine; or, The Rosicrucian: A Romance* (dated 1811).[14] In the same year, Shelley, together with his sister Elizabeth, published *Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire* and, while at Oxford, he issued a collection of verses (ostensibly burlesque but quite subversive), *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson*, with Thomas Jefferson Hogg.

In 1811 Shelley anonymously published a pamphlet called "The Necessity of Atheism", which was brought to the attention of the university administration, and he was called to appear before the college's fellows, including the Dean, George Rowley. His refusal, to college authorities, to answer questions regarding whether or not he authored the pamphlet resulted in his expulsion from Oxford on 25 March 1811, along with Hogg. The rediscovery in mid-2006 of Shelley's long-lost "Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things"—a long, strident anti-monarchical and anti-war poem printed in 1811 in London by Crosby and Company as "by a gentleman of the University of Oxford" and dedicated to Harriet Westbrook—gives a new dimension to the expulsion, reinforcing Hogg's implication of political motives ("an affair of party").[15] Shelley was given the choice to be reinstated after his father intervened, on the condition that he would have to recant his avowed views. His refusal to do so led to a falling-out with his father.

Marriage

Four months after being sent down from Oxford, on 28 August 1811, the 19-year-old Shelley eloped to Scotland with the 16-year-old Harriet Westbrook,[16] a pupil at the same boarding school as Shelley's sisters, whom his father had forbidden him to see. Harriet Westbrook had been writing Shelley passionate letters threatening to kill herself because of her unhappiness at the school and at home. Shelley, heartbroken after the failure of his romance with his cousin, Harriet Grove, cut off from his mother and sisters, and convinced he had not long to live, impulsively decided to rescue Westbrook and make her his beneficiary.[17] Westbrook's 28-year-old sister Eliza, to whom Harriet was very close, appears to have encouraged the young girl's infatuation with the future baronet.[18] The Westbrooks pretended to disapprove but secretly encouraged the elopement. Sir Timothy Shelley, however, outraged that his son had married beneath him (Harriet's father, though prosperous, had kept a tavern), revoked Shelley's allowance and refused ever to receive the couple at Field Place. Harriet also insisted that her sister Eliza, whom Shelley detested, live with them. Shelley invited his friend Hogg to share his ménage but asked him to leave when Hogg made advances to Harriet. Shelley was also at this time increasingly involved in an intense platonic relationship with Elizabeth Hitchener, a 28-year-old unmarried schoolteacher of advanced views, with whom he had been corresponding. Hitchener, whom Shelley called the "sister of my soul" and "my second self",[19] became his muse and confidante in the writing of his philosophical poem *Queen Mab*, a Utopian allegory.



William Godwin in 1802, by James Northcote

During this period, Shelley travelled to Keswick in England's Lake District, where he visited the poet Robert Southey, under the mistaken impression that Southey was still a political radical. Southey, who had himself been expelled from the Westminster School for opposing flogging, was taken with Shelley and predicted great things for him as a poet. He also informed Shelley that William Godwin, author of *Political Justice*, which had greatly influenced him in his youth, and which Shelley also admired, was still alive.[20] Shelley wrote to Godwin, offering himself as his devoted disciple and informing Godwin that he was "the son of a man of fortune in Sussex" and "heir by entail to an estate of £6,000."[21] Godwin, who supported a large family and was chronically penniless, immediately saw in Shelley a source of his financial salvation. He wrote asking for more particulars about Shelley's income and began advising him to reconcile with Sir Timothy.[22] Meanwhile, Sir Timothy's patron, the Duke of Norfolk, a former Catholic who favoured Catholic emancipation, was also vainly trying to reconcile Sir Timothy and his son, whose political career the Duke wished to encourage.[23] A maternal uncle ultimately supplied money to pay Shelley's debts, but Shelley's relationship with the Duke may have influenced his decision to travel to Ireland.[24] In Dublin, Shelley published his *Address to the Irish People*, priced at five pence, "the lowest possible price" to "awaken in the minds of the Irish poor a knowledge of their real state, summarily pointing out the evils of that state and suggesting a rational means of remedy—Catholic Emancipation and a repeal of the Union Act" (the latter "the most successful engine that England ever wielded over the misery of fallen Ireland").[25] His activities earned him the unfavourable attention of the British government.

Shelley was increasingly unhappy in his marriage to Harriet and particularly resented the influence of her older sister Eliza, who discouraged Harriet from breastfeeding their baby daughter (Ianthe Elizabeth Shelley [1813–1876]). Shelley accused Harriet of having married him for his money. Craving more intellectual female companionship, he began spending more time away from home, among other things studying Italian with Cornelia Turner and visiting the home and bookshop of William Godwin. Eliza and Harriet moved back with their parents.

Richard Rothwell's portrait of Mary Shelley in later life was shown at the Royal Academy in 1840, accompanied by lines from Percy Shelley's poem *The Revolt of Islam* calling her a "child of love and light".[26]

Shelley's mentor Godwin had three highly educated daughters, two of whom, Fanny Imlay and Claire Clairmont, were his adopted step-daughters. Godwin's first wife, the celebrated feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, had died shortly after giving birth to Godwin's biological daughter Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, named after her mother. Fanny was the illegitimate daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and her lover, the diplomat speculator and writer, Gilbert Imlay. Claire was the illegitimate daughter of Godwin's second wife, Mary Jane Clairmont Godwin (c. 1766–1841), whom Shelley considered a vulgar woman—"not a proper person to form the mind of a young girl", he is supposed to have said[27]—and Sir John Lethbridge. The brilliant Mary was being educated in Scotland when Shelley first became acquainted with the Godwin family. When she returned, Shelley fell madly in love with her, repeatedly threatening to commit suicide if she did not return his affections.

On 28 July 1814 Shelley abandoned Harriet, now pregnant with their son Charles (November 1814 – 1826) and (in imitation of the hero of one of Godwin's novels) he ran away to Switzerland with Mary, then 16, inviting her stepsister Claire Clairmont (also 16) along because she could speak French. The older sister Fanny was left behind, to her great dismay, for she, too, may have fallen in love with Shelley. The three sailed to Europe, and made their way across France to Switzerland on foot, reading aloud from the works of Rousseau, Shakespeare, and Mary's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft (an account of their travels was subsequently published by the Shelleys).

After six weeks, homesick and destitute, the three young people returned to England. The enraged William Godwin refused to see them, though he still demanded money (to be given to him under another name, to avoid scandal). In late 1815, while living in a cottage in Bishopsgate, Surrey, with Mary and avoiding

creditors, Shelley wrote *Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude*. It attracted little attention at the time, but has now come to be recognised as his first major achievement. At this point in his writing career, Shelley was deeply influenced by the poetry of Wordsworth.

Routes of the 1814 and 1816 Continental tours

Byron

In mid-1816 Shelley and Mary made a second trip to Switzerland. They were prompted to do this by Mary's stepsister Claire Clairmont, who, in competition with Mary, had initiated a liaison with Lord Byron the previous April just before his self-exile on the continent. Byron's interest in her had waned, and Claire used the opportunity of introducing him to Mary and Shelley to act as bait to lure him to Geneva. The couple and Byron rented neighbouring houses on the shores of Lake Geneva. Regular conversation with Byron had an invigorating effect on Shelley's output of poetry. While on a boating tour the two took together, Shelley was inspired to write his *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, often considered his first significant production since *Alastor*.[28] A tour of Chamonix in the French Alps inspired *Mont Blanc*, a poem in which Shelley claims to have pondered questions of historical inevitability (determinism) and the relationship between the human mind and external nature. Shelley also encouraged Byron to begin an epic poem on a contemporary subject, advice that resulted in Byron's composition of *Don Juan*. In 1817 Claire gave birth to a daughter by Byron, Alba, later renamed Allegra, whom Shelley offered to support, making provisions for her and for Claire in his will.

Second marriage

After Shelley and Mary's return to England, Fanny Imlay, Mary's half-sister and Claire's stepsister, despondent over her exclusion from the Shelley household and perhaps unhappy at being omitted from Shelley's will, travelled from Godwin's household in London to kill herself in Wales in early October. On 10 December 1816 the body of Shelley's estranged wife Harriet was found in an advanced state of pregnancy,[29] drowned in the Serpentine in Hyde Park, London. Shelley had made generous provision for Harriet and their children in his will and had paid her a monthly allowance as had her father. Many years later, in 1875, Claire Clairmont claimed to Edward John Trelawny, a biographer of Shelley, that just before her death Harriet left her children with her sister Elizabeth, and believed herself to have been abandoned by a new lover, 36-year-old Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Maxwell, who had been deployed abroad, after a landlady refused to forward his letters to her.[30] However, Shelley himself never alluded to Harriet's alleged affair with Maxwell, and he offered no proof to the courts during his custody battle with Harriet's family that Harriet had been unfaithful to him with anyone, even though rumors about Harriet's alleged other lovers had been promoted by William Godwin and others, and even though such a claim would have helped his case. On 30 December 1816, barely three weeks after Harriet's body was recovered, Shelley and Mary Godwin were married. The marriage was intended partly to help secure Shelley's custody of his children by Harriet and partly to placate Godwin, who had coldly refused to speak to his daughter for two years, and who now received the couple. The courts, however, awarded custody of Shelley and Harriet's children to foster parents, on the grounds that Shelley had abandoned his first wife for Mary without cause and was an atheist.[31][32]

The Shelleys took up residence in the village of Marlow, Buckinghamshire, where a friend of Percy's, Thomas Love Peacock, lived. Shelley took part in the literary circle that surrounded Leigh Hunt, and during this period he met John Keats. Shelley's major production during this time was *Laon and Cythna; or, The Revolution of the Golden City*, a long narrative poem in which he attacked religion and featured a pair of incestuous lovers. It was hastily withdrawn after only a few copies were published. It was later edited and reissued as *The Revolt of Islam* in 1818. Shelley wrote two revolutionary political tracts under the *nom de plume* "The Hermit of Marlow". On Boxing Day 1817, presumably prompted by travellers' reports of Giovanni Battista Belzoni's success (where the French had failed) in removing the "half sunk and shattered visage" of the so-called "Young Memnon" from the Ramesseum at Thebes, Shelley and his friend Horace Smith began a poem each about the Memnon or "Ozymandias", Diodorus's "King of Kings", who in an inscription on the base of his statue challenged all comers to "surpass my works". Within four months of the publication of *Ozymandias* (or Rameses II), his seven-and-a-quarter-ton bust arrived in London, just too late for Shelley to have seen it.[33]

Italy

On 11 March 1818 the Shelleys and Claire left England to take Claire's daughter, Allegra, to her father Byron, who had taken up residence in Venice. Two days before they left, William, Clara and Allegra were all baptised at the church of St Giles in the Fields.[34] Contact with the older and more established poet encouraged Shelley to write once again. During the latter part of the year, he wrote *Julian and Maddalo*, a lightly disguised rendering of his boat trips and conversations with Byron in Venice, finishing with a visit to a madhouse. This poem marked the appearance of Shelley's "urbane style". He then began the long verse drama *Prometheus Unbound*, a re-writing of the lost play by the ancient Greek poet Aeschylus, which features talking mountains and a petulant spirit who overthrows Jupiter. Tragedy struck, however, first in 1818 when Shelley's infant daughter Clara Everina died during yet another household move, and then in 1819 when his son Will died of fever (most likely malaria) in Rome.

Posthumous Portrait of Shelley Writing Prometheus Unbound *in Italy* – painting by Joseph Severn, 1845

A baby girl, Elena Adelaide Shelley, was born on 27 December 1818 in Naples, Italy, and registered there as the daughter of Shelley and a woman named "Marina Padurin". However, the identity of the mother is an unsolved mystery. Some scholars speculate that her true mother was actually Claire Clairmont or Elise Foggi, a nursemaid for the Shelley family. Other scholars postulate that she was a foundling Shelley adopted in hopes of distracting Mary after the death of Clara.[35] Shelley referred to Elena in letters as his "Neapolitan ward". However, Elena was placed with foster parents a few days after her birth and the Shelley family moved on to yet another Italian city, leaving her behind. Elena died 17 months later, on 10 June 1820.

Reni or Sirani's portrait of Beatrice Cenci, which captivated Shelley and inspired his verse play on her parricide[36]

The Shelleys moved between various Italian cities during these years; in later 1818 they were living in Florence, in a pensione on the Via Valfonda. This street now runs alongside Florence's railway station, and the building now on the site, the original having been destroyed in World War II, carries a plaque recording the poet's stay. Here they received two visitors, a Sophia Stacey and her much older travelling companion, Corbet Parry-Jones (to be described by Mary as "an ignorant little Welshwoman"). Sophia had for three years in her youth been ward of the poet's aunt and uncle. The pair moved into the same pensione and stayed for about two months. During this period Mary gave birth to another son; Sophia is credited with suggesting that he be named after the city of his birth, so he became Percy Florence Shelley, later Sir Percy. Shelley also wrote his "Ode to Sophia Stacey" during this time. They then moved to Pisa, largely at the suggestion of its resident Margaret King, who, as a former pupil of Mary Wollstonecraft, took a maternal interest in the younger Mary and her companions. This "no nonsense *grande dame*"[37] and her common-law husband George William Tighe inspired the poet with "a new-found sense of radicalism". Tighe was an agricultural theorist, and provided the younger man with a great deal of material on chemistry, biology and statistics.[38]

Shelley completed *Prometheus Unbound* in Rome, and he spent mid-1819 writing a tragedy, *The Cenci*, in Leghorn (Livorno). In this year, prompted among other causes by the Peterloo Massacre, he wrote his best-known political poems: *The Masque of Anarchy* and *Men of England*. These were probably his best-remembered works during the 19th century. Around this time period, he wrote the essay *The Philosophical View of Reform*, which was his most thorough exposition of his political views to that date.

In 1820, hearing of John Keats's illness from a friend, Shelley wrote him a letter inviting him to join him at his residence at Pisa. Keats replied with hopes of seeing him, but instead, arrangements were made for Keats to travel to Rome with the artist Joseph Severn. Inspired by the death of Keats, in 1821 Shelley wrote the elegy *Adonais*.

In 1821 Shelley met Edward Ellerker Williams, a British naval officer, and his wife Jane Williams. Shelley developed a very strong affection towards Jane and addressed a number of poems to her. In the poems addressed to Jane, such as *With a Guitar, To Jane* and *One Word is Too Often Profaned*, he elevates her to an exalted position worthy of worship.

In 1822 Shelley arranged for Leigh Hunt, the British poet and editor who had been one of his chief supporters in England, to come to Italy with his family. He meant for the three of them—himself, Byron and Hunt—to create a journal, which would be called *The Liberal*. With Hunt as editor, their controversial writings would be disseminated, and the journal would act as a counter-blast to conservative periodicals such as *Blackwood's Magazine* and *Quarterly Review*.

Leigh Hunt's son, the editor Thornton Leigh Hunt, was later asked by John Bedford Leno whether he preferred Shelley or Byron as a man. He replied:

> On one occasion I had to fetch or take to Byron some copy for the paper which my father, himself and Shelley, jointly conducted. I found him seated on a lounge feasting himself from a drum of figs. He asked me if I would like a fig. Now, in that, Leno, consists the difference, Shelley would have handed me the drum and allowed me to help myself.[39]

Death

On 8 July 1822, less than a month before his 30th birthday, Shelley drowned in a sudden storm on the Gulf of La Spezia while returning from Leghorn (Livorno) to Lerici in his sailing boat, the *Don Juan*. He was returning from having set up *The Liberal* with the newly arrived Leigh Hunt. The name *Don Juan*, a compliment to Byron, was chosen by Edward John Trelawny, a member of the Shelley–Byron Pisan circle. However, according to Mary Shelley's testimony, Shelley changed it to *Ariel*, which annoyed Byron, who forced the painting of the words "Don Juan" on the mainsail. The vessel, an open boat, was custom-built in Genoa for Shelley. It

did not capsize but sank; Mary Shelley declared in her "Note on Poems of 1822" (1839) that the design had a defect and that the boat was never seaworthy. In fact the *Don Juan* was overmasted; the sinking was due to a severe storm and poor seamanship of the three men on board.[40]

Some believed his death was not accidental, that Shelley was depressed and wanted to die; others suggested he simply did not know how to navigate. More fantastical theories, including the possibility of pirates mistaking the boat for Byron's, also circulated.[40][41] There is a small amount of material, though scattered and contradictory, suggesting that Shelley may have been murdered for political reasons:[42] previously, at Plas Tan-Yr-Allt, the Regency house he rented at Tremadog, near Porthmadog, north-west Wales, from 1812 to 1813, he had allegedly been surprised and attacked during the night by a man who may have been, according to some later writers, an intelligence agent.[43] Shelley, who was in financial difficulty, left forthwith leaving rent unpaid and without contributing to the fund to support the house owner, William Madocks; this may provide another, more plausible explanation for this story.

The Funeral of Shelley by Louis Édouard Fournier (1889). Pictured in the centre are, from left, Trelawny, Hunt, and Byron. In fact, Hunt did not observe the cremation, and Byron left early. Mary Shelley, who is pictured kneeling at left, did not attend the funeral according to customs at the time.

Two other Englishmen were with Shelley on the boat. One was a retired naval officer, Edward Ellerker Williams; the other was a boatboy, Charles Vivien.[44] The boat was found ten miles (16 km) offshore, and it was suggested that one side of the boat had been rammed and staved in by a much stronger vessel. However, the liferaft was unused and still attached to the boat. The bodies were found completely clothed, including boots.

In his *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*, Trelawny noted that the shirt in which Williams's body was clad was "partly drawn over the head, as if the wearer had been in the act of taking it off [...] and [he was missing] one boot, indicating also that he had attempted to strip." Trelawny also relates a supposed deathbed confession by an Italian fisherman who claimed to have rammed Shelley's boat to rob him, a plan confounded by the rapid sinking of the vessel.

Edward Onslow Ford's sculpture in the Shelley Memorial at University College, Oxford

Shelley's body was washed ashore and later, in keeping with quarantine regulations, was cremated on the beach near Viareggio. In Shelley's pocket was a small book of Keats' poetry. Upon hearing this, Byron (never one to give compliments) said of Shelley: "I never met a man who wasn't a beast in comparison to him." The day after the news of his death reached England, the Tory newspaper *The Courier* printed: "Shelley, the writer of some infidel poetry, has been drowned; *now* he knows whether there is God or no."[45] A reclining statue of Shelley's body, depicted as washed up on the shore, created by sculptor Edward Onslow Ford at the behest of Shelley's daughter-in-law, Jane, Lady Shelley, is the centrepiece of the Shelley Memorial at University College, Oxford. An 1889 painting by Louis Édouard Fournier, *The Funeral of Shelley* (also known as *The Cremation of Shelley*), contains inaccuracies. In pre-Victorian times it was English custom that women would not attend funerals due to a combination of social pressures and their own physical and emotional exhaustion health reasons. Mary Shelley did not attend but was featured in the painting, kneeling at the left-hand side. Leigh Hunt stayed in the carriage during the ceremony but is also pictured. Also, Trelawny, in his account of the recovery of Shelley's body, records that "the face and hands, and parts of the body not protected by the dress, were fleshless," and by the time that the party returned to the beach for the cremation, the body was even further decomposed. In his graphic account of the cremation, he writes of Byron being unable to face the scene, and withdrawing to the beach.[46]

Shelley's ashes were interred in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome, near an ancient pyramid in the city walls. His grave bears the Latin inscription, *Cor Cordium* (Heart of Hearts), and, in reference to his death at sea, a few lines of "Ariel's Song" from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: "Nothing of him that doth fade / But doth suffer a sea-change / Into something rich and strange." The grave site is the second in the cemetery. Some weeks after Shelley's ashes had been buried, Trelawny had come to Rome, had not liked his friend's position among a number of other graves, and had purchased what seemed to him a better plot near the old wall. The ashes were exhumed and moved to their present location. Trelawny had purchased the adjacent plot, and over 60 years later his remains were placed there.

A memorial was eventually created for Shelley at the Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey, along with his old friends Lord Byron and John Keats.

Shelley's heart

Shelley's widow Mary bought a cliff-top home at Boscombe, Bournemouth, in 1851. She intended to live there with her son, Percy, and his wife Jane, and had the remains of her own parents moved from their London burial place at St Pancras Old Church to an underground mausoleum in the town. The property is now known as Shelley Manor. When Lady Jane Shelley was to be buried in the

family vault, it was discovered that in her copy of *Adonais* was an envelope containing ashes, which she had identified as belonging to her father-in-law.[47] The family had preserved the story that when Shelley's body had been burned, his friend Edward Trelawny had snatched the whole heart from the pyre.[46][48][49] These same accounts say that the heart had been buried with Shelley's son, Percy. All accounts agree, however, that the remains now lie in the vault in the churchyard of St Peter's Church, Bournemouth.

For several years in the 20th century some of Trelawny's collection of Shelley ephemera, including a painting of Shelley as a child, a jacket, and a lock of his hair, were on display in "The Shelley Rooms", a small museum at Shelley Manor. When the museum finally closed in 2001, these items were returned to Lord Abinger, who descends from a niece of Lady Jane Shelley.[50]

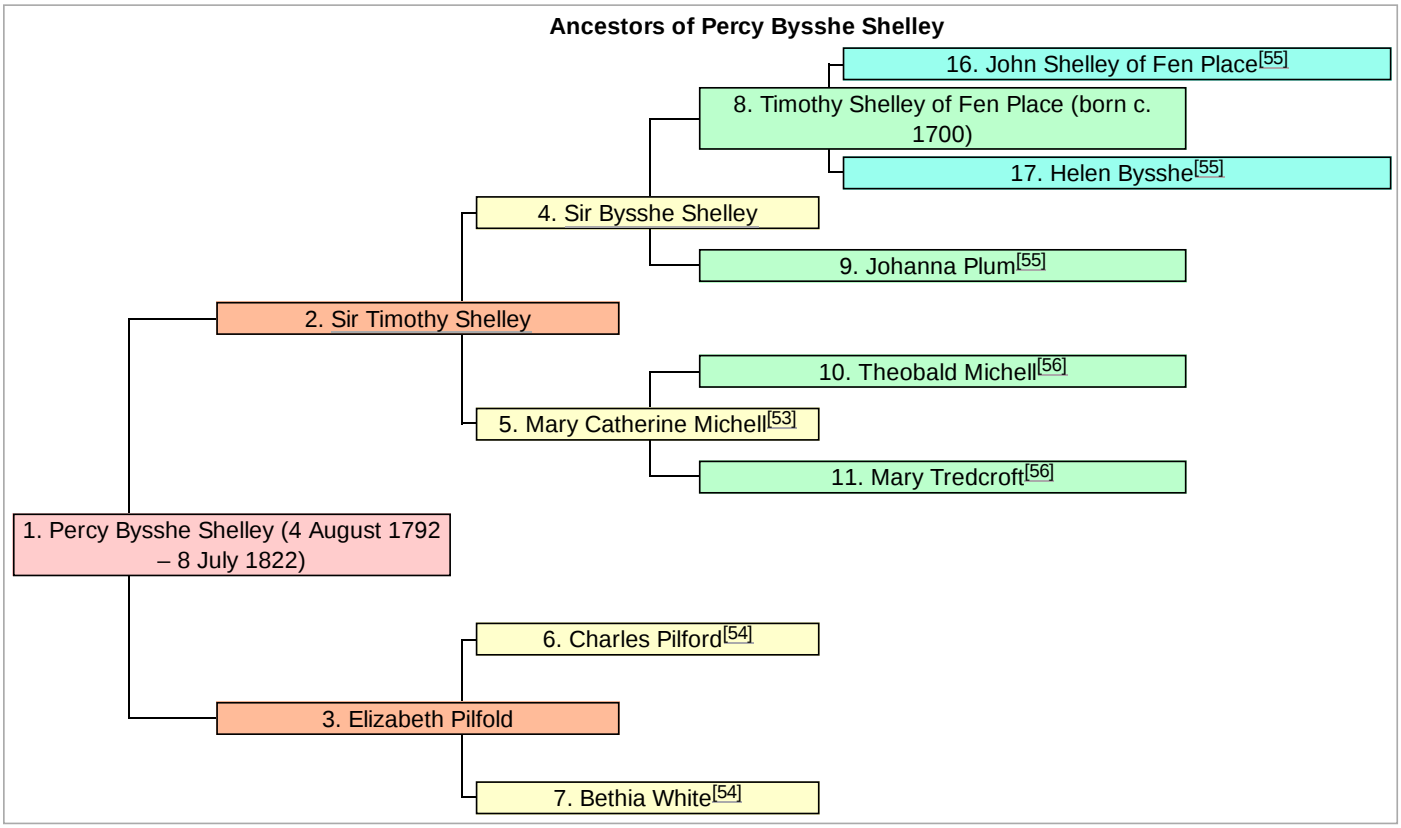
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
COR CORDIUM
NATUS IV AUG. MDCCXCII
OBIIT VIII JUL. MDCCCXXII
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change:
Into something rich and strange
Shelley's gravestone in the Cimitero Acattolico in Rome; phrases from Ariel's Song in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* appear below

Family history

Ancestry

Henry Shelley became father to younger Henry Shelley. This younger Henry had at least three sons. The youngest of them, Richard Shelley was born in 1583, and baptized 17 November 1583 in Warminghurst, Sussex, England.[51] Richard later married on 3 February 1601 in Itchingfield to Jonne (aka Joane) Feste/Feest/Fuste,[52] daughter of John Feest/Fuste from Itchingfield, near Horsham, West Sussex. Their grandson, John Shelley of Fen Place, Turners Hill, West Sussex, was married himself to Helen Bysshe, daughter of Roger Bysshe. Their son Timothy Shelley of Fen Place (born c. 1700) married widow Johanna Plum from New York City. Timothy and Johanna were the great-grandparents of Percy.

Ancestry chart


Ancestors of Percy Bysshe Shelley
16. John Shelley of Fen Place[55]
8. Timothy Shelley of Fen Place (born c. 1700)
17. Helen Bysshe[55]
4. Sir Bysshe Shelley
9. Johanna Plum[55]
2. Sir Timothy Shelley
10. Theobald Michell[56]
5. Mary Catherine Michell[53]
11. Mary Tredcroft[56]
1. Percy Bysshe Shelley (4 August 1792 – 8 July 1822)
6. Charles Pilford[54]
3. Elizabeth Pilfold
7. Bethia White[54]

Family

Shelley was born to Sir Timothy Shelley (1753–1844) and his wife Elizabeth Pilfold following their marriage in October 1791. His father was son and heir to Sir Bysshe Shelley, 1st Baronet of Castle Goring (1731–1815) by his wife Mary Catherine Michell (d. 1760). His mother was daughter of Charles Pilfold of Effingham. Through his paternal grandmother, Shelley was a great-grandson to Reverend Theobald Michell of Horsham. Through his maternal and paternal lineage, he was a cousin of Thomas Medwin—a childhood friend and Shelley's biographer.[57]

Shelley was the eldest of six children. His younger siblings were:

- John Shelley of Avington House (1806–1866; m.1827 Elizabeth Bowen (d. 1889));
- Mary Shelley (NB. not to be confused with his wife);
- Elizabeth Shelley (d. 1831);
- Hellen Shelley (d. 1885);
- Margaret Shelley (d. 1887).

Shelley's uncle, brother of his mother Elizabeth Pilfold, was Captain John Pilfold, a Naval Commander who served under Admiral Nelson during the Battle of Trafalgar.[58]

Descendants

Three children survived Shelley: Ianthe and Charles, his daughter and son by Harriet; and Percy Florence Shelley, his son by Mary. Charles, who suffered from tuberculosis, died in 1826 after being struck by lightning during a rainstorm. Percy Florence, who eventually inherited the baronetcy in 1844, died without children "of his body", as the old legal phrase went.

Several members of the Scarlett family were born at Percy Florence's seaside home "Boscombe Manor" in Bournemouth. They were descendants of Percy Florence's and Jane Gibson's adopted daughter, Bessie Florence Gibson. The 1891 census shows Jane Shelley, Percy Florence Shelley's widow, living at Boscombe Manor with several great-nephews. Percy Florence Shelley died in 1889, and his widow, the former Jane St. John (born Gibson), died in 1899.

The only lineal descendants of the poet are therefore the children of Ianthe. Ianthe Eliza Shelley was married in 1837 to Edward Jeffries Esdaile of Cothelstone Manor, grandson of the banker William Esdaile of Lombard Street, London. The marriage resulted in the birth of three daughters, Ianthe Harriet Shelley (1839–1849), Eliza Margaret (1841–1930), and Mary Emily Sydney (1848–1854), and three sons, Charles Edward (1842–1842), Charles Edward Jeffries (1845–1922), and William (1846–1915). Ianthe died in 1876, and her only descendants result from the marriage of Charles Edward Jeffries Esdaile and Marion Maxwell Sandbach.

Mike Rutherford, bass player/guitarist of progressive rock band Genesis, is a descendant of Shelley's maternal aunt.[59]

Idealism

Shelley's unconventional life and uncompromising idealism, combined with his strong disapproving voice, made him an authoritative and much-denigrated figure during his life and afterward. He became an idol of the next two or three or even four generations of poets, including the important Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite poets Robert Browning, Alfred Tennyson, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Algernon Charles Swinburne, as well as Lord Byron, Henry David Thoreau, W. B. Yeats, Aleister Crowley and Edna St. Vincent Millay, and poets in other languages such as Jan Kasprowicz, Rabindranath Tagore, Jibanananda Das and Subramanya Bharathy.

Nonviolence

Henry David Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*, the writings of Leo Tolstoy, and Mahatma Gandhi's passive resistance were all influenced and inspired by Shelley's theories of nonviolent resistance, in protest and political action.[60] It is known that Gandhi would often quote Shelley's *The Masque of Anarchy*,[61] which has been called "perhaps the first modern statement of the principle of nonviolent resistance".[62][63]

Vegetarianism

Shelley wrote several essays on the subject of vegetarianism, the more prominent of which were "A Vindication of Natural Diet" (1813) and "On the Vegetable System of Diet".[64][65] Shelley's eagerness for vegetarianism is connected with India. In 1812 he was converted to vegetarianism by his friend John Frank Newton, who had himself been converted while living in India.[66]

Shelley, in heartfelt dedication to sentient beings, wrote:[67]

> If the use of animal food be, in consequence, subversive to the peace of human society, how unwarrantable is the injustice and the barbarity which is exercised toward these miserable victims. They are called into existence by human artifice that they may drag out a short and miserable existence of slavery and disease, that their bodies may be mutilated, their social feelings outraged. It were much better that a sentient being should never have existed, than that it should have existed only to endure unmitigated misery"; "Never again may blood of bird or beast/ Stain with its venomous stream a

> human feast,/ To the pure skies in accusation steaming"; and "It is only by softening and disguising dead flesh by culinary preparation that it is rendered susceptible of mastication or digestion, and that the sight of its bloody juices and raw horror does not excite intolerable loathing and disgust.[67]

In *Queen Mab: A Philosophical Poem* (1813) he wrote about the change to a vegetarian diet: "And man ... no longer now/ He slays the lamb that looks him in the face,/ And horribly devours his mangled flesh."[68]

Shelley was fond of eating bread and he preferred to drink water or milk if he could get it.[69] Shelley may not have been a strict vegetarian as Trelawny stated that he had observed some left uneaten cold meat and bread on a bookshelf in Shelley's reading room.[69] Trelawny asked Shelley what this was and he replied "Why, that must be my dinner. It's very foolish; I thought I had eaten it."[70][71]

Legacy

Keats–Shelley Memorial House, at right with a red sign by the Spanish Steps, Rome

Shelley's mainstream following did not develop until a generation after his death, unlike Lord Byron, who was popular among all classes during his lifetime despite his radical views. For decades after his death, Shelley was mainly appreciated by only the major Victorian poets, the pre-Raphaelites, the socialists, and the labour movement. One reason for this was the extreme discomfort with Shelley's political radicalism, which led popular anthologists to confine Shelley's reputation to the relatively sanitised "magazine" pieces such as "Ozymandias" or "Lines to an Indian Air".

He was admired by C. S. Lewis,[72] Karl Marx, Robert Browning, Henry Stephens Salt, Gregory Corso, George Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell, Isadora Duncan,[4] Constance Naden,[73] Upton Sinclair,[74] Gabriele d'Annunzio, Aleister Crowley, and W. B. Yeats.[75] Shelley had an enduring and profound influence on the Dutch poets of "De nieuwe Gids" (Kloos, Van Eeden e.a.). Samuel Barber, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Roger Quilter, Howard Skempton, John Vanderslice, and Ralph Vaughan Williams composed music based on his poems.

Critics such as Matthew Arnold endeavoured to rewrite Shelley's legacy to make him seem a lyricist and a dilettante who had no serious intellectual position and whose longer poems were not worthy of study. Arnold famously described Shelley as a "beautiful and ineffectual angel". This position contrasted strongly with the judgement of the previous generation who knew Shelley as a sceptic and a radical.

Many of Shelley's works remained unpublished or little known after his death, with longer pieces such as *A Philosophical View of Reform* existing only in manuscript until the 1920s. This contributed to the Victorian idea of him as a minor lyricist. With the inception of formal literary studies in the early twentieth century and the slow rediscovery and re-evaluation of his *œuvre* by scholars such as Kenneth Neill Cameron, Donald H. Reiman, and Harold Bloom, the modern idea of Shelley could not be more different.

Paul Foot, in his *Red Shelley*, has documented the pivotal role Shelley's works—especially *Queen Mab*—have played in the genesis of British radicalism. Although Shelley's works were banned from respectable Victorian households, his political writings were pirated by men such as Richard Carlile who regularly went to jail for printing "seditious and blasphemous libel" (i.e. material proscribed by the government), and these cheap pirate editions reached hundreds of activists and workers throughout the nineteenth century.[76]

Shelley's poem "To the Queen of My Heart" was allegedly forged and falsely attributed to Shelley by James Augustus St. John, who took over as editor of the *London Weekly Review* when Carlile was imprisoned in 1827.[77]

In other countries, such as India, Shelley's works both in the original and in translation have influenced poets such as Rabindranath Tagore[78] and Jibanananda Das. A pirated copy of *Prometheus Unbound* dated 1835 is said to have been seized in that year by customs at Bombay.

Paul Johnson, in his book *Intellectuals*,[79] describes Shelley in a chapter titled "Shelley or the Heartlessness of Ideas". In the book, Johnson describes Shelley as an amoral person, who by borrowing money which he did not intend to return, and by seducing young innocent women who fell for him, destroyed the lives of everybody with whom he had interacted, including his own.

In 2005 the University of Delaware Press published an extensive two-volume biography by James Bieri. In 2008 the Johns Hopkins University Press published Bieri's 856-page one-volume biography, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: A Biography*.

The rediscovery in mid-2006 of Shelley's long-lost "Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things", as noted above, was slow to be followed up until the only known surviving copy was acquired by the Bodleian Library in Oxford as its 12-millionth book in November 2015 and made available online.[80] An analysis of the poem by the only person known to have examined the whole work

at the time of the original discovery appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*: H.R. Woudhuysen, "Shelley's Fantastic Prank", 12 July 2006.[81]

In 2007, John Lauritsen published *The Man Who Wrote Frankenstein*, making the controversial claim that Percy's contributions to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* were extensive.[82] In 2008 Charles E. Robinson credited Percy as the co-author of *Frankenstein* in *The Original Frankenstein* published by the Bodleian Library in Oxford and by Random House in the US.[83] More modern scholars strongly dispute these findings, including Professor Charlotte Gordon (https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/10/books/review/romantic-outlaws-about-the-lives-of-mary-wollstonecraft-and-mary-shelley.html?smid=em-share) in *Romantic Outlaws: The Extraordinary Lives of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley, published in 2015. (https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/may/03/romantic-outlaws-extraordinary-lives-mary-wollstonecraft-shelley-review-mother-child-reunion-charlot?CMP=share_btn_link)* The celebrated poet and literary scholar Fiona Sampson said, on the 200th anniversary of Frankenstein's creation, "In recent years Percy's corrections, visible in the Frankenstein notebooks held at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, have been seized on as evidence that he must have at least co-authored the novel. In fact, when I examined the notebooks myself, I realised that Percy did rather less than any line editor working in publishing today." (https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jan/13/frankenstein-at-200-why-hasnt-mary-shelley-been-given-the-respect-she-deserves-?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

In late 2014 Shelley's work led lecturers from the University of Pennsylvania[84] and New York University[85] to produce a massive open online course (MOOC) on the life of Percy Shelley and *Prometheus Unbound*.[86]

In popular culture

- Shelley is believed to have been the model for Marmion Herbert, one of two male protagonists in Benjamin Disraeli's 1837 novel *Venetia*; the other, Lord Cadurcis, being based on Lord Byron.[87]
- Henry James's 1888 novella *The Aspern Papers* relates a struggle to obtain some letters by Shelley years after his death. It was made into a stage play and an opera.
- *Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters (1915) includes a poem *Percy Bysshe Shelley*[88] as the namesake of the speaker, whose ashes "were scattered near the pyramid of Caius Cestius / Somewhere near Rome."
- Howard Brenton's play, *Bloody Poetry* (1984), explores the complex relationships and rivalries between Shelley, Mary Shelley, Claire Clairmont, and Byron.
- Shelley's cremation at Viareggio and the removal of his heart by Trelawny are described in Tennessee Williams's 1953 play *Camino Real* by a fictional Lord Byron.
- A visit to Lord Byron's estate by Shelley and Mary Shelley is the setting for Ken Russell's 1986 film *Gothic*.
- A fictional Shelley befriends cavalry officer Matthew Hervey in the 2002 Allan Mallinson novel *A Call to Arms*.
- Novelist Julian Rathbone fictionalises Shelley in *A Very English Agent* (2002), wherein a 19th-century government spy tampers with the poet's boat, causing his death.
- Shelley appears as himself in Peter Ackroyd's novel *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein* (2008).
- Shelley is a major character in Helen Edmundson's play *Mary Shelley*, which premiered on a nationwide tour in 2012.[89]
- Shelley's poem "Love's Philosophy" appears frequently both in the second season of the mystery television series *Twin Peaks* and in the first episode of the second season of *Lewis* named "And the Moonbeams Kiss the Sea".
- Shelley's poem "Ozymandias" lends its name to an episode of *Breaking Bad*. AMC had a teaser trailer for the final season of the show in which Bryan Cranston reads the poem.
- Shelley is portrayed in *Blackadder*'s third-series episode "Ink and Incapability" as one of Samuel Johnson's admirers. He is played by Lee Cornes.
- In the novel "Six oies cendrées" (2001), French author Henri Coulonges gives a fictional account of the provenance of the mystery baby girl Elena Adelaide Shelley in Naples as the daughter of Elise Foggi.[90][91]
- The last line of Stanza LIII of Shelley's elegy of John Keats, *Adonais* "No more let Life divide what Death can join together." is referenced a number of times by major characters in the Showtime/Sky Victorian horror series *Penny Dreadful*.
- Some of Shelley's poems are mentioned in the detective video game *L.A. Noire*, where they are used for solving a series of murders.
- During the 2017 elections in the United Kingdom, Jeremy Corbyn frequently quoted the final stanza of Shelley's 1819 poem, *The Masque of Anarchy*, which begins, "Rise like lions after slumber, in unvanquishable number!" The words came to be used by Corbyn supporters as a sort of unofficial battle cry.[92]
- In Charles McCarry's political novel *Shelley's Heart: A Thriller* (1995), the action centres around a fictitious secret society at Yale whose members celebrate Trelawny's snatching Shelley's heart from the cremation fire.
- Shelley appears as a character in *Doctor Who* season 12 episode 8, *The Haunting of Villa Diodati*.

Major works

- (1810) *Zastrozzi*
- (1810) *Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire*
- (1810) *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson: Being Poems Found Amongst the Papers of That Noted Female Who Attempted the Life of the King in 1786*
- (1810 dated 1811) *St. Irvyne; or, The Rosicrucian*
- (1812) *The Devil's Walk: A Ballad*
- (1813) *Queen Mab: A Philosophical Poem*
- (1814) *A Refutation of Deism: In a Dialogue*
- (1815) *Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude*
- (1816) *The Daemon of the World*
- (1816) *Mont Blanc*
- (1816) *On Death*
- (1817) *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* (text)
- (1817) *Laon and Cythna; or, The Revolution of the Golden City: A Vision of the Nineteenth Century*
- (1817) *The Revolt of Islam, A Poem, in Twelve Cantos*
- (1817) *History of a Six Weeks' Tour through a part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland* (with Mary Shelley)
- (1818) *Ozymandias* (text)
- (1818) *The Banquet (or The Symposium)* by Plato, translation from Greek into English[93]
- (1818) *Rosalind and Helen: A Modern Eclogue* (published in 1819)
- (1818) *Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills, October 1818*
- (1819) *The Cenci, A Tragedy, in Five Acts*
- (1819) *Ode to the West Wind* (text)
- (1819) *The Masque of Anarchy*
- (1819) *England in 1819*
- (1819) *A Philosophical View of Reform* (published in 1920)
- (1819) *Julian and Maddalo: A Conversation*
- (1820) *Peter Bell the Third* (published in 1839)
- (1820) *Prometheus Unbound, A Lyrical Drama, in Four Acts*
- (1820) *To a Skylark*
- (1820) *The Cloud*
- (1820) *The Sensitive Plant*[94]
- (1820) *Oedipus Tyrannus; Or, Swellfoot The Tyrant: A Tragedy in Two Acts*
- (1820) *The Witch of Atlas* (published in 1824)
- (1821) *Adonais*
- (1821) *Ion* by Plato, translation from Greek into English
- (1821) *A Defence of Poetry* (first published in 1840)
- (1821) *Epipsychidion*
- (1822) *Hellas, A Lyrical Drama*
- (1822) *Wolfstein; or, The Mysterious Bandit* (chapbook)
- (1822) *The Triumph of Life* (unfinished, published in 1824)

Short prose works

- "The Assassins, A Fragment of a Romance" (1814)
- "The Coliseum, A Fragment" (1817)
- "The Elysian Fields: A Lucianic Fragment" (1818)
- "Una Favola (A Fable)" (1819, originally in Italian)

Essays

- The Necessity of Atheism (1811)
- Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things (1811)
- Declaration of Rights (http://www.panarchy.org/shelley/rights.html) (1812)
- A Letter to Lord Ellenborough (1812)

- A Defence of Poetry
- A Vindication of Natural Diet (1813)
- A Refutation of Deism (http://www.ratbags.com/rsoles/comment/shelleydeism.htm) (1814)
- On the Vegetable System of Diet (1814–1815; published 1929)
- On Love (1818)
- On Life (1819)
- On a Future State (1815)
- On The Punishment of Death
- Speculations on Metaphysics (1814)
- Speculations on Morals (1817)
- On Christianity (incomplete, probably 1817; published 1859)
- On the Literature, the Arts and the Manners of the Athenians
- On *The Symposium*, or Preface to *The Banquet* Of Plato
- On Friendship
- On Frankenstein (written in 1817; published in 1832)

Chapbooks

- *Wolfstein; or, The Mysterious Bandit* (1822)
- *Wolfstein, The Murderer; or, The Secrets of a Robber's Cave* (1830)

Collaborations with Mary Shelley

- (1817) *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*
- (1818) *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*[95][96]
- (1820) *Proserpine*
- (1820) *Midas*[97]

See also

- List of peace activists
- Bolesław Prus#Later years (use of Shelley's tomb inscription on Prus's tomb) (in Polish)
- Godwin–Shelley family tree
- Rising Universe – A water sculpture celebrating the life of Shelley near his birthplace in Horsham, Sussex

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18. Bieri (2008), pp. 154–76.
19. Bieri (2008), p. 195.
20. Bieri (2008), p. 185.
21. Bieri (2008), pp. 188 and 189. For comparison, Jane Austen, in her novel *Pride and Prejudice*, set during this period, describes Mr. Darcy's annual income as 10,000 £. See i Brad deLong's discussion of this in "How Rich is Mr. Darcy?" (http://delong.typepad.com/sdj/2007/03/how_rich_is_fit.html)
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